

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Original) A process for thickening a liquid or pourable product comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of 1:9 to 9:1 to form a fruit or vegetable mixture;
- iv) incorporating the fruit or vegetable mixture in the product to be thickened,

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits are selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of root vegetables, stem vegetables, leafstalk vegetables, bulb vegetables, immature flower vegetables, leaf vegetables, tuber vegetables, bud vegetables seed vegetables and mixtures thereof.

Claim 2 (Original) The process according to claim 1, wherein the first and the second portion are combined in a weight ratio from 2:8 to 8:2.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~either one of claim 1 or 2~~claim 1, wherein the first and the second portion are from the same vegetable or fruit species.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1, wherein the PME-deactivation of step ii) is carried out by a hot break process.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 wherein the fruit or vegetable mixture is incorporated in the product in an amount of 0.5 to 80% by weight based on the amount of the product.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1, wherein the product is a food product.

Claim 7 (Original) A thickening agent comprising a fruit or vegetable mixture of two portions of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables, said thickening agent being obtainable by a process comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of the fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of from 1:9 to 9:1 to form the fruit or vegetable mixture;

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of root vegetables, stem vegetables, leafstalk vegetables, bulb vegetables, immature flower vegetables, leaf vegetables, tuber vegetables, bud vegetables, seed vegetables and mixtures thereof.

Claim 8 (Original) The thickening agent according to claim 7 wherein the process comprises at least one drying step.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended) The thickening agent according to ~~either one of claim 7 or 8~~claim 7, wherein the thickening agent is dry.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended) A method for reducing the perceived acidity of a product by incorporating into that product 0.5 to 95% by weight based on the weight of the product of the thickening agent according to ~~any one of claims 7 to 9~~claim 7.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) A product comprising 0.5% to 95% by weight based on the product of the thickening agent according to ~~any one of claims 7 to 9~~claim 7.

Claim 12 (Original) The product according to claim 11 further comprising of from 0.5% to 50% by weight of edible salt.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended) The product according to ~~either one of claims 11 or 12~~claim 11 wherein the product is a food product.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) The product according to ~~claim 11-13~~claim 11, wherein the product is an emulsion.

Claim 15 (Original) The product according to claim 14, wherein the emulsion is an oil-in-water emulsion.